



MassBroadband 123 network to create hundreds of construction jobs and spur economic growth for more than 120 communities in western and north central Massachusetts

SANDISFIELD –Today, public officials and firefighters at the Sandisfield Fire Department kicked-off construction of the **MassBroadband 123** fiber-optic network project to expand broadband access to more than 120 communities in western and north central Massachusetts. The event marks the launch of one of the largest fiber-optic expansions under construction in the nation.

The 1,300 mile Internet backbone network will attract private investment and job opportunities, help local governments deliver services more efficiently, and will provide direct connections to the nearly 1,400 schools, libraries, hospitals and public safety facilities that currently lack reliable, affordable Internet service, including the Sandisfield Fire Department.

“For too long, families and businesses in western Massachusetts have lived without reliable and affordable high-speed Internet access,” said Governor Patrick. “Today, as we commence the installation of more than 1,000 miles of fiber-optic cable across the region, we start the critical final step in delivering broadband access to everyone. The digital divide in Massachusetts is about to close.”

“Our Administration is committed to making infrastructure investments that unlock private investment and innovation and create jobs in every corner of the Commonwealth,” said Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray. “**MassBroadband 123** exemplifies that strategy, and we are getting results for the people and businesses of western and north central Massachusetts that have been unconnected for too long. Through broadband, we are giving our neighbors, small business owners, students, teachers, public safety officials and municipal leaders the tools they need to compete and thrive in today’s global economy.”

The Patrick-Murray Administration began work with the Legislature to expand broadband

access across the Commonwealth during its first term, when Governor Patrick introduced and signed legislation to create the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), providing state capital funding for broadband-related infrastructure projects. These resources, combined with an effective partnership with the Obama Administration and the Massachusetts congressional delegation, helped the MBI secure multiple federal grants worth more than \$80 million, including a \$45.4 million American Recovery and Reinvestment Act award through the highly-competitive National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

The BTOP funds will be used to complete the **MassBroadband 123** project which, over the next two years, will put hundreds of people to work building a fiber-optic network to serve 333,500 households and 44,000 businesses in an area with more than one million residents. The MBI, the Commonwealth's Information Technology Division, and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security are providing \$26.2 million in matching funds for the project.

"Governor Patrick deserves an immense amount of credit for keeping good on his word to bring broadband to central and western Massachusetts," said Congressman John Olver. "His leadership, along with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars dedicated to this crucial project, are making broadband a reality. This investment will strengthen our economy, make our communities safer and improve our children's educational opportunities."

"Not only will this project create needed jobs in the short term, but it will also bring investment and job growth to these regions over the long haul," said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo. "In this day and age, no community in our Commonwealth should be without high-speed Internet access. This initiative will go a long way toward ensuring that our children, businesses and public facilities have the broadband access needed to thrive."

"This is a great infrastructure improvement for Western Massachusetts. This expansion will provide faster and more reliable service and the increased connectivity will benefit both residents and businesses," said Stephen M. Brewer, Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. "I applaud the Administration and MassBroadband for working together to create jobs and continue to move forward to improve the economy across the state."

"Today's announcement is important not only for the immediate jobs it will create, but also for the significant step forward in addressing one of the most significant regional disparities in the Commonwealth," said Senator Gale D. Candaras. "Governor Patrick and MassBroadband

should be commended for making this commitment to the under-served communities of Western and Central Massachusetts."

"I am excited to join with Governor Patrick, Lt. Governor Murray and fellow local elected officials to announce this exciting step in our combined efforts to close the digital divide and bring jobs to western Massachusetts," said Senator Benjamin B. Downing, chair of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. "Broadband Internet is the roads and bridges - or the electric grid - of the 21st century economy. If we want to bring jobs to this region, we need to provide the infrastructure to do it. Today we start to build it, right here in Sandisfield."

"Expanding access to broadband throughout Massachusetts is a job-creator, plain and simple," said Senator Jamie Eldridge. "In this day and age, it's critical that residents and businesses throughout the Commonwealth have access to high-speed internet, and I applaud the Patrick-Murray Administration for its commitment to investing in the infrastructure – whether it's our education system, or transportation system, or our broadband communications systems – necessary to support and promote economic growth in our state."

"The small towns of western Massachusetts offer a special quality of life and this investment in high-speed broadband will help our communities to connect with the new economic reality," said Senator Michael R. Knapik. "MassBroadband will help diversify the local economy and allow for new growth opportunities for small and medium-sized industry."

"I am thrilled that we are moving closer to connecting those here in Western Mass that are still unserved," said Representative Smitty Pignatelli. "I hear from my constituents almost daily with stories how the lack of broadband adversely affects their lives. On behalf of my constituents, I thank Governor Patrick, the MBI, the Commonwealth's Information Technology Division and the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security for their diligence in closing the great digital divide across the Commonwealth."

"Connecting more Americans to broadband Internet is central to the Obama administration's strategy to help create the jobs of the future – giving small businesses access to consumers around the world," said Anna M. Gomez, Deputy Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. "This Recovery Act investment in broadband infrastructure will pave the way for greater economic growth and an enhanced quality of life in Massachusetts."

"The MBI is committed to bringing affordable broadband access that will greatly benefit the

residents and businesses of western and north central Massachusetts,” said MBI Director Judith Dumont. “Our team is in place and will continue to make significant and timely progress to build the **MassBroadband 123** network and connect the unconnected.”

“The **MassBroadband 123** network will allow police, fire and emergency personnel to access to the most up-to-date information and resources to protect the public,” said Sandisfield Fire Chief Ralph Morrison. “This will greatly enhance our ability to keep our residents safe.”

To expand high-speed Internet access in the region, the MBI will attach fiber-optic cable to 35,000 existing utility poles in the project’s service area. The MBI recently signed an agreement with G4S Technology, LLC to serve as the design-builder for the **MassBroadband 123** network . Under the agreement, G4S will complete the final design, engineering and construction of the fiber-optic Internet backbone. The MBI is a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC), a public economic development agency chartered by the Commonwealth to spur innovation across the state. The MTC will own

**MassBroadband 123**

and work with G4S to oversee the final design and construction of the network, which is expected to be completed by June 2013.

G4S Technology has expertise in successfully designing and building broadband networks, and has deployed over two million miles of fiber in more than 200 rural and metropolitan areas, including 55 miles of fiber-optic cable along I-91 in Massachusetts from the Vermont to the Connecticut borders. The fiber along I-91 is a key component of the **MassBroadband 123** network and was built through the MBI’s partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation.

“G4S Technology is honored to be chosen as the design/build partner for **MassBroadband 123** ,” said Bob Sommerfeld, President of G4S Technology. “Bringing the benefits of broadband to this mostly rural area will improve the quality of life and help secure a stronger economic future for businesses and residents, while greatly strengthening public safety and security, education and health care in these Massachusetts communities. The benefits will continue to grow and be realized for years to come.”

The MBI is currently working with broadband service providers in western and north central Massachusetts to expand broadband connectivity. In March, the MBI signed an agreement with Axia NGNetworks USA to serve as the network operator for the **MassBroadband 123** network.

Axia will provide wholesale services on the network to broadband service providers and maintain and refresh the fiber-optic network to ensure its operability and efficiency. Axia is committed to investing \$35 to \$45 million in the operations and expansion of

***MassBroadband 123***

, which will generate economic growth in the region and spur investment by broadband service providers. The

***MassBroadband 123***

network will be open to allow any broadband provider to connect and offer its services, increasing competition and affordability for broadband customers.

"Axia has been very impressed by the innovative thinking of the MBI and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts throughout the ***MassBroadband 123*** initiative," said Murray Sigler, President of Axia North America. "We are already working with broadband service providers in the region, and are excited about the opportunities this network will bring to the residents, businesses and government of western Massachusetts."

"Governor Patrick and the MBI are making it possible for WiSpring to provide broadband solutions that will create jobs and bolster the economy," said Crispin Tresp, founder of WiSpring. "By working with the MBI and Axia, we're positioning ourselves to expand services through the ***MassBroadband 123*** network."

###